

VZCZCXRO7364
OO RUEHCI
DE RUEHKA #1914/01 3440314
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 100314Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5764
INFO RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 9423
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 1057
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0355
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 2625
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 8213
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 8315
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1944
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0430
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0611
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0061
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 DHAKA 001914

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SES-O
DEPT FOR SCA/PB, SCA/EX
DCHA/OFDA FOR ROBERT THAYER
AID/W FOR AA MARK WARD AND ANE ANNE DIX
DCHA/FFP FOR MATTHEW NIMS AND PAUL NOVICK
ROME FOR FODAG
BANGKOK FOR RDM/A TOM DOLAN, ROB BARTON
KATHMANDU FOR USAID OFDA BILL BERGER AND SUE MCINTYRE
TREASURY FOR ELIZABETH WEISS AND SUSAN CHUN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [AMGT](#) [SOCI](#) [ECON](#) [PINR](#) [EAGR](#) [SENV](#)
BG

SUBJECT: Country Team, USAID/DART, and U.S. Military Coordination
in the Cyclone Sidr Response

REF: DHAKA 1848

11. Summary. In response to Tropical Cyclone Sidr in southern Bangladesh, the U.S. Government (USG) organized an interagency response under the leadership of the Department of State that included contributions from USAID and the Department of Defense (DOD). USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART) was integrated into the country team effort to assess needs and coordinate logistical support for emergency relief efforts, including through the use of unique DOD capabilities. The U.S. military contribution to the cyclone relief operation focused on providing potable water, transportation of relief commodities between Dhaka and the affected area, and providing medical support. The USAID/DART attended weekly planning meetings with country team members, as well as U.S. and Bangladesh military leadership, to discuss the U.S. contribution to the cyclone response. As part of the country team effort, the USAID/DART contributed to operational and transition planning, once the acute phase of the disaster had shifted to recovery and rehabilitation. End Summary.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE RESPONSE EFFORTS

12. At the request of the Charge d'Affaires, a.i., on November 17 and 18, U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) deployed a 23-member Humanitarian Assistance Survey Team (HAST) from III Marine Expeditionary Force to identify key areas for U.S. military support. Following the formal Government of Bangladesh (GOB) request for U.S. military assistance,

PACOM amplified response operations and deployed 3d Marine Expeditionary Brigade commanded by BGen Ronald Bailey. His command includes USS Kearsarge, with helicopters from 22d MEU and US Navy hovercraft, U.S. Air Force and Marine Corps C-130 transport aircraft, as well as elements of the 13th Air Force Contingency Response Group for the management of airfield operations and cargo handling. In addition, a U.S. army medical team, which was already in country for an earlier planned exercise, began operating alongside Bangladeshi counterparts at Patuakhali hospital.

¶3. At the request of the Bangladesh military during joint planning meetings, US C-130s moved GOB and donor relief commodities from Dhaka to Barisal. Subsequently, helicopters from the 22d MEU and hovercraft from USS Kearsarge along with Bangladesh military helicopters transported this cargo to approximately 20 high priority locations identified by the GOB, per reftel. U.S. military planners provided information to the USAID/DART on types of cargo and destinations.

¶4. Overall, the requirement for military airlift support for USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) relief commodities was limited. The first USAID/OFDA shipment of emergency relief goods on November 20 occurred prior to arrival of USS Kearsarge and 22d MEU helicopter assets and was moved by commercial trucks. The U.S. military expedited the second USAID/OFDA shipment via air transport on November 27 as the commodities, including water purification units and water bladders, were considered priority needs for cyclone-affected populations. Afterward, two missions using C-130s moved these relief items to Barisal on November 28 and ¶29.

¶5. While non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international

DHAKA 00001914 002 OF 003

organizations did not report the need for extensive military lift, the USAID/DART did validate a few requests. Most of the requirement for III MEB support came from the GOB to move goods from its relief stocks. U.S. military assets greatly facilitated the movement of USAID/OFDA and Embassy personnel conducting assessments, and the Civil Military Operations Center in Barisal played a key role in ensuring the smooth delivery of relief supplies. We also effectively integrated our public affairs efforts and took advantage of the military's unique capabilities.

¶6. The USS Kearsarge remained on station until the arrival of the USS Tarawa and the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, which was already scheduled to deploy to Bangladesh for a previously scheduled exercise, QBengal Flash,Q around December 3. With the concurrence of the GOB, the 11th MEU was re-tasked to support ongoing USG efforts, by assuming the logistical support role previously carried out by the USS Kearsarge and the 22nd MEU. This change to Tarawa's mission was consistent with the prevailing humanitarian support environment and USG priorities.

GOB AND U.S. GOVERNMENT WEEKLY PLANNING MEETINGS

¶7. During Operation Sea Angel II, U.S. and Bangladesh military leadership held regular planning meetings to discuss the U.S. role in the current humanitarian response to Cyclone Sidr. USAID/DART, country team, and U.S. military commanders and staff generally attended these meetings, which were hosted by the Bangladesh Armed Forces Division. At the November 25 meeting, the Bangladesh military outlined major priorities and how U.S. assets could address these needs (see reftel).

¶8. On November 29, the USAID/DART attended the second planning meeting. The Bangladesh military declined a proposal by U.S. military planners to open a second logistical base in Chittagong. U.S. military C-130s to conduct four to six daily flights between Dhaka and Barisal until December 4 to transport the remaining humanitarian cargo identified by the Bangladesh military (see reftel). In addition, the U.S. continued helicopter transport of relief commodities from Barisal to the remote locations the Bangladesh military identified as most needing assistance.

¶9. Based on consultation with the GOB military and with the concurrence of the country team, the U.S. military shifted its priority to moving food supplies. This decision was reached after USG representatives and the Bangladeshi military assessed that the need for clean water had largely been met. Although the GOB positioned 424 doctors and medical teams to respond to the disaster, there was a remaining requirement for U.S.-provided emergency medical services, which the USG helped meet. U.S. military commanders assisted with relief efforts until all major supplies related to disaster relief had been delivered, but did not take part in long term recovery activities during this deployment. The Country Team is now re-examining theater security cooperation plans to determine possible future DOD contributions to follow-on phases of recovery and rehabilitation. Specifically, we have requested the deployment of civil affairs assessment teams to help develop plans for future civil and military reconstruction programs.

DHAKA 00001914 003 OF 003

USAID/DART COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

¶10. Over the past three weeks, the USAID/DART's military liaison officer worked closely with the country team and both U.S. and Bangladesh military counterparts to ensure that military support activities comply with overall USG priorities. U.S. military commanders and planners have collaborated effectively during this crisis. Country team representatives have also been integrated into the military planning efforts, with liaison officers assigned to the III MEU in Dhaka and Barisal. The USAID/DART assisted the U.S. military to shape and define the requirements and to vet incoming requests for support. The U.S. military commander on the ground was able to draw upon USAID/OFDA planning documents to help define his indicators and triggers for mission completion.

¶11. Coordination and cooperation with the host nation military was excellent. On November 29, the USAID/DART met with Brigadier General Rashid, commander of the coordination cell in Barisal, who outlined overall logistical support in response to the cyclone. Highlighting the large quantity of cargo now moving by truck and barge, he agreed that air operations from Dhaka to Barisal will likely become unnecessary in the coming days. In addition, Brigadier General Rashid reported that water delivery had become less of a humanitarian priority now, noting, however, that several isolated coastal islands still require food assistance. (Note: The CDA a.i. and III MEU Commanding General subsequently met with Bangladesh Army Chief of Staff General Moeen Uddin Ahmed and obtained his concurrence with our proposed transition plan).

LOOKING FORWARD

¶12. Diplomacy, Development, and Defense have been integrated effectively in the response to Cyclone Sidr's devastation. The Embassy intends to expand upon this analysis further and conduct a formal lessons learned exercise as we transition from the emergency response to the longer term recovery and rehabilitation phases. The USG response to this cyclone drew upon our institutional and individual experiences with previous interagency responses to disasters in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Southeast Asia. We believe some of the lessons learned from this operation will also be useful to policy makers as we plan for the future.

PASI